

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*):

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

20-11

Orleans

J

EAS.54

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Bridge-Dyer Beach
Road Area

Address: 25 Bridge Road

Historic Name: Henry and Almira Harding House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: ca. 1853

Source: Deed research, vital records

Style/Form: Greek Revival/ Cape

Architect/Builder: Unknown/ Henry Harding

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Parged

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Ell addition (1938-1952), dormer, new windows

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.71 acres

Setting: This small parcel is located on the west side of Bridge Road just north of the intersection with Dyer Prince Road. The surrounding area on this historic street includes houses from the 18th and 19th centuries. More recently, large lots have been subdivided with the addition of mid-20th century dwellings. This house is set fairly close to the street on its level parcel. An asphalt driveway leads to the south side of the house. The parcel around the house is landscaped with expanses of lawn, mature trees and shrubs, and minimal foundation plantings.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

25 BRIDGE ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

J

EAS.54

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Henry and Almira Harding House, built in ca. 1853, appears to have begun as a Greek Revival-style Cape, with the front elevation facing south, onto which was added the one-story ell. The house appears to rest on a parged foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles with a projecting, molded-box cornice with partial returns across the gable ends (a Greek Revival-style feature). Any chimneys on the main block have been removed, but the side ell has a heavy, brick chimney.

Indications that this house may have begun as a Cape include the 1938 USGS aerial photo showing the form without the side ell (Photo 3). By the time the 1952 USGS aerial survey was conducted, the ell was in place. The other indication is the pair of small square windows near the roof juncture on the front elevation that is typically only found on Capes. The windows are all modern, thermal 6/6 windows. The 6/6 muntin pattern was likely the original pattern. The front entrance was moved to the side ell after it was added. The entrance is projecting and protected by a small, hip-roofed open enclosure supported by square columns. The entrance has partial sidelights, and there is a rectangular window with an ornate muntin pattern on the left side elevation of the entrance which is likely original to the addition. The right (north) elevation of the main block has a shed-roofed dormer that is a later addition.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay in Orleans and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, this house was connected to and had a shared ownership with the building that is now 85 Bridge Road (EAS.169). The MHC Building Form for that property prepared in 2020 provides much of the background for this house at 25 Bridge Road. However, that Building Form incorrectly identifies 85 Bridge Road as the Henry and Almira Harding House. Given the unusual form of that house, its historic siting set back from the road, and based on other records referenced here, I believe that house served as the *barn* for the Harding House that was later converted into a dwelling in the mid-20th century. That would mean this house at 25 Bridge Road is the ca. 1853 Harding House.

The following narrative is taken from the 85 Bridge Road Form B, with edits and additions as necessary. Bridge Road first consisted of the southern portion that extended from King's Highway to Rock Harbor in Orleans. It was first shown on the 1795 Josiah Rogers map of the town. Rock Harbor was a significant port in the packet trade to and from Boston, Salem, Maine, and the Canadian maritime provinces. The shore west of where Bridge Road turns north was the site of numerous saltworks until the mid-1800s. The northern portion of Bridge Road was established in 1837 when the first bridge from which the road took its name was built over Boat Meadow Creek. The road connected with Samoset Road and eventually connected Rock Harbor to Eastham center.

The house is marked "H. Harding" on the 1858 Map of Cape Cod (Figure 2), and likely was built by South Eastham carpenter Henry Harding (1806-1859) between 1850 and 1855. In 1850, Henry Harding and his second wife, Susan Mayo Eldredge, whom he married in 1851, were living with his sister Lucy Freeman and her family, probably in their father's 225 Bridge Road home. By

Continuation sheet 1

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

25 BRIDGE ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

J

EAS.54

1855, however, he had moved his family to a single-family dwelling.¹ Henry Harding had owned real estate in Eastham since May 1828, when his father Ephraim Harding (1764-1848) sold him five acres of land bounded on the east by Reuben Nickerson's land (20 Bridge Street) and a "young orchard" across the road.² In 1832, Ephraim and his wife Lucy Smith Harding (1769-1844) sold Henry the west half of their own house, and two acres also bounded on the east by Nickerson's land standing on the west side of the road.³ By 1840 census, the households of Ephraim Harding and his sons Prince S. Harding (probably to the north) and Henry (probably to the south) are enumerated consecutively in this neighborhood. Henry Harding and his first wife, Almira Smith (1806-1850) had two children before 1840 and another three afterward (two of whom died). By 1850, Henry Harding was a 45-year-old carpenter with \$742 (probably half of his father's house) in real property and had sons Michael H. (16 and at sea), Ephraim, and Nehemiah, and daughter Almira. Henry remarried to Susan Mayo Eldridge in 1851 and went on to have five more children - Laura S., Henry Adams, Charles F., Horace Henry, and Susan Eleanor (called Lena) - before Henry Harding died in 1859.

Henry's widow, Susan Mayo Harding, continued to live in this house. She died in 1895, and the property passed to her children. In 1883, Lena Harding married Chatham native and mariner James Bradley Steele (1858-1925), and in 1885, the widow and daughter of Henry Harding's eldest son Michael Hopkins Harding (1834-1877) sold their one-sixth share of Henry Harding's property to Michael's half-sister Lena (Harding) Steele.⁴ By 1900, the Steeles were living at this house with their children George B., born in 1887, and Helena V., born in 1895. The 1902 Eastham tax list credits J. B. Steele with a house valued at \$600, a barn (likely referring to 85 Bridge Road) and shed at \$300, 15 acres, a horse, a cow, twenty hens, and a "mill" valued at \$150. The 1910 Barnstable County Atlas map shows "J. B. Steele" as owner (Figure 3).

Both the 1900 and 1910 census list Steele as an undertaker, and he acted as administrator on many Eastham estates. In 1913, Lena Steele's half-brother Horace Harding, who lived in Charlestown, deeded his share of their father's property to Lena.⁵ James Bradley Steele later appears to have worked as a realtor in Orleans and died there in 1925. Helena Steele took care of her mother Lena until she died in July 1924. In December 1925, George B. and Helena V. Steele deeded what is now 25 and 85 Bridge Road to Ella Phinney Harding, the wife of Lena Steele's older brother Henry Adams Harding, who like her had grown up in this house.⁶ Eastham tax records for 1926 credit Ella Phinney Harding with a house valued at \$1265, a five-acre homestead lot, a barn and shed, poultry houses, and "old pump house," and another outbuilding, along with a horse and twenty chickens. Henry Harding died in 1928 in Eastham. Ella P. Harding was listed living here alone in the 1930 and 1940 census. She died in Somerville in 1943. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) prepared a series of aerial photographic surveys of Cape Cod starting in 1938. The photo of this location is instructive in seeing how cleared the land was around these houses, and it shows how the house and barn had a shared driveway (Photo 3).

In June 1944, the executor of Ella Harding's will sold what was then a three-acre parcel to Herbert D. Nickerson (1889-1967), still including both 25 and 85 Bridge Road.⁷ He also owned his great-grandfather Reuben Nickerson's 20 Bridge Road property (EAS.53). In 1945, Nickerson registered a plan for this property to confirm its boundaries, and that plan shows both this house and the barn (Figure 4). In 1956, the parcel with just 25 Bridge Road was registered by Herbert Nickerson⁸, and in 1974 the property was subdivided with this house on Lot 10 (Figure 4).

Margaret and Herbert D. Nickerson were living in Greenville, SC in 1977 when they sold just this property to James I. and Inella Arthur of North Eastham (Cert. 75636).⁹ In 2015, the estate of Inella Arthur sold this property to the current owners, Lisa Ann and Armand Audette, then of Wellfleet.¹⁰

¹ Another indication of the ca. 1850-1855 construction date is that he sold his half interest in the 225 Bridge Road house to his brother-in-law Abner Freeman in 1853 (Book 373/ Page 365).

² Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 13/ Page 88.

³ Book 13/ Page 89.

⁴ Book 216/ Page 600.

⁵ Book 331/ Page 4.

⁶ Book 434/ Page 3.

⁷ Book 615/ Page 33.

⁸ Certificate of Title 18867.

⁹ Certificate of Title 75636.

¹⁰ Certificate of Title 207040.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

EASTHAM

25 BRIDGE ROAD

Area(s) Form No.

J

EAS.54

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1858 Map, *Map of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, & Nantucket*, Walling, Henry.
1910 Map, *Atlas of Barnstable County*, Boston, MA: Walker Litho. & Publishing Co., 1910.

Barnstable County Registry of Deeds. Deeds, Land Court Records, and Subdivision Maps.
Barnstable Patriot Archives. Sturgis Library Digital Newspaper Archive,
<https://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Sturgis/#panel=home>.

Commonwealth Collaborative. MHC Building Form EAS.54. 25 Bridge Road. 1995.
Dunham's 1929 Eastham (Mass.) Street Directory.

Jenkins, Candace. Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Building Form EAS.J. 1998.

Larson Fisher Associates. Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Building Form EAS.169. 85 Bridge Road. 2020.

Lowe, Alice Albert. *Nauset on Cape Cod: A History of Eastham*. Falmouth, MA: Eastham Historical Society, 1968.

Massachusetts Historical Commission. "Reconnaissance Survey Report: Eastham." Typescript, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, 1984.

Trayser, Donald G. Eastham, *Massachusetts, 1651-1951: Eastham's Three Centuries*. Lexington, MA: Hancock Press for Eastham Tercentenary Committee, 1951.

Town of Eastham Tax Commitment Books. 1902-57.

United States Geological Survey. Aerial Survey 1938-2020,

<https://www.capecodcommission.org/our-work/cape-cod-chronology-viewer/>.

Wilding, Don. *A Brief History of Eastham*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2017.

www.ancestry.com - Vital records.

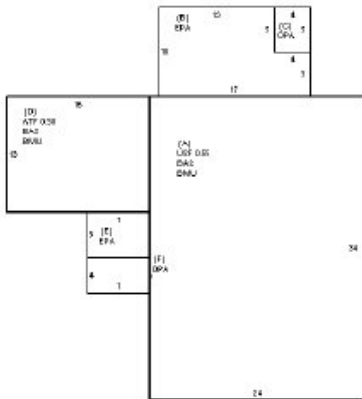


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Bridge Road, looking southwest.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)	Form No.
J	EAS.54



Figure 2. Detail of 1858 Map of Cape Cod (circle added).



Figure 3. Detail of 1910 Barnstable County Atlas (arrow added).



Photo 3. Detail of 1938 USGS aerial survey (circle added).

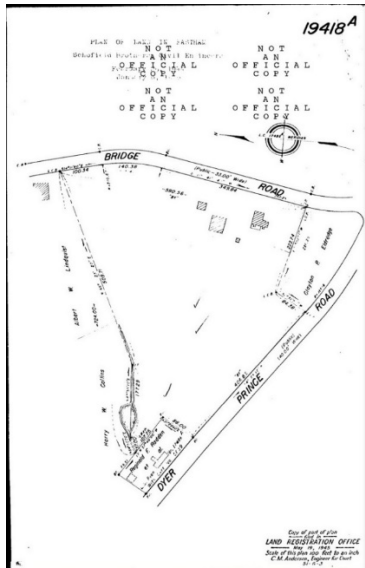


Figure 4. 1945 Pan, Plan 19418-A.

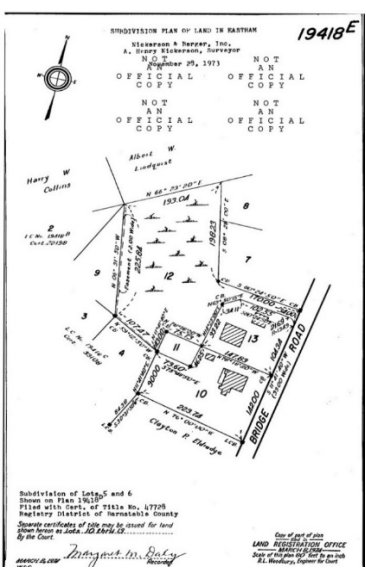


Figure 5. 1974 Subdivision Plan, Plan 19418-E.